

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY PARIS
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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 04 PARIS 1647Z

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E.O.11652: XGDS-3
TAGS: PFOR US VN
SUBJ: US/SRV TALKS: JUNE 3 MEETING

1. HOLBROOKE OPENED THE SECOND MEETING AT AMERICAN EMBASSY BY SAYING WE WELCOME INFORMATION PROVIDED ON THE 20 MIAS AND INDICATING THAT CONTINUED PROGRESS ON THIS MATTER IS IMPORTANT CONCERN TO US. HE THEN REPEATED US WILLINGNESS TO RECEIVE VIETNAMESE REPRESENTATIVES AT IDENTIFICATION LABORATORY IN HONOLULU AND NOTED OUR ADDITIONAL APPRECIATION FOR THEIR PROVIDING US UNIDENTIFIED REMAINS IN ACCORDANCE WITH WOODCOCK COMMISSION REQUEST.

2. TURNING TO VIETNAMESE "JOINT COMMUNIQUE", HOLBROOKE MADE CLEAR THAT WE COULD NOT MAKE ANY COMMITMENT ON ANY AMOUNT OF MONEY SUCH AS WAS PROPOSED IN POINT TWO. STATING THAT WHILE WE UNDERSTOOD THE VIETNAMESE VIEW REGARDING OUR "OBLIGATION" TO PROVIDE AID, HE EMPHASIZED THAT THIS VIEW IS NOT SHARED BY THE PRESIDENT, THE CONGRESS OR A GREAT MAJORITY OF AMERICANS. HE DOUBTED THAT ECONOMIC DEMANDS BASED ON THE PAST WILL EVER BE ACCEPTABLE TO THE AMERICAN PEOPLE.

3. HE THEN INDICATED AMERICAN WILLINGNESS TO LOOK TO THE
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FUTURE IN TERMS OF ANY EVENTUAL ECONOMIC RELATIONSHIP AND DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS, EMPHASIZING THAT THE TWO SIDES MUST RECOGNIZE THE POSITIVE ELEMENTS OF THE PRESENT SITUATION AND TAKE THOSE STEPS WHICH ARE NOW POSSIBLE. TO THIS END, HOLBROOKE ADDED, THE US HAS PROPOSED ESTABLISHING DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS AND EXCHANGING EMBASSIES - WHICH US BELIEVES IS THE BEST WAY TO MOVE

AHEAD TO RESOLVE ISSUES REMAINING BETWEEN US.

4. PHAN HIEN BEGAN LENGTHY RESPONSE BY REGRETTING THAT 30 DAYS HAD TRANSPIRED SINCE LAST MEETING BUT US HAD NOT PUT FORTH ANYTHING NEW. HE EMPHASIZED POSITIVE STEPS HANOI HAD TAKEN ON PROVIDING INFORMATION ON 20 ADDITIONAL CASES AND PUTTING FORWARD OVERALL SOLUTION IN COMMUNIQUE WHICH HE HAD FULL POWERS TO SIGN WITH US NOW. THIS WAS IN MARKED CONTRAST TO US LACK OF SPECIFIC INITIATIVES AND ACTIONS. CLAIMING THAT SRV PROPOSED COMMUNIQUE IS REALISTIC AND JUST, HIEN SAID IT REPRESENTED ONLY WAY FOR US TO ENTER INTO LONG-TERM FRIENDLY RELATIONS WITH VIETNAM. HE BEGAN POINT BY POINT ENUMERATION OF COMMUNIQUE, ASKING RHETORICALLY WHETHER THE US AGREED WITH EACH OR NOT. HE PRESUMED THAT US WOULD GENERALLY AGREE WITH POINT 1 ON MIA'S.

5. TO POINT TWO HIEN BEGAN BY SAYING HANOI IS PREPARED TO BE FLEXIBLE ON STATING THE EXACT AMOUNTS OF AID DESIRED AND IN RESPONSE TO HOLBROOKE STATEMENT THAT FIGURES WERE OBVIOUSLY TAKEN FROM NIXON'S 1973 LETTER, SAID THAT HANOI COULD CHANGE THE NUMBERS TO MAKE IT EASIER FOR US. HIEN REITERATED VIETNAMESE READINESS TO ASSIST US FIND APPROPRIATE FORMS AND MEANS TO PROVIDE AID AND ADDED THAT VIETNAMESE ARE ALSO PREPARED TO ACCOMPLISH THOSE STEPS WHICH CAN BE TAKEN THIS YEAR AND LEAVE NEXT YEAR THOSE WHICH ARE MORE DIFFICULT.

6. TURNING TO QUESTION OF US EMBARGO, HIEN CITED
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RECENT COMMUNICATIONS FROM US BUSINESS REPRESENTATIVES INQUIRING ABOUT POSSIBILITIES OF TRADING WITH HANOI. HE ARGUED THAT US EMBARGO HURTS ONLY US COMPANIES SINCE VIETNAM CAN FIND SOKES IN OTHER PLACES FOR ALL OF

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THEIR TRADE NEEDS.

7. MOVING ON TO POINT THREE, HIEN NOTED THAT BOTH SIDES HAVE STATED OFTEN THAT DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS SHOULD BE ESTABLISHED AT THE AMBASSADORIAL LEVEL. HIEN THEN CALCULATED THAT THE US AGREED TO TWO OF THEIR THREE POINTS IN THE COMMUNIQUE - THOSE WHICH HE FELT WERE FAVORABLE TO THE US - BUT REJECTED THAT WHICH ADDRESSED SRV INTERESTS.

8. HIEN CITED DIFFICULTY HE WILL FACE IN HANOI WHEN HE REPORTS US REJECTION OF SRV DRAFT. GIVEN RECENT "EFFORTS" TO OBTAIN INFORMATION ON THE 20 MIA CASES, US REJECTION WILL HAVE EFFECT OF POURING COLD WATER ON THAT PROCESS. HIEN ENDED PRESENTATION WITH CALL FOR RENEWED EFFORTS TO OVERCOME THESE REMAINING DIFFICULTIES.

9. HOLBROOKE DISAGREED WITH HIEN'S CHARACTERIZATION OF US RESPONSE AS HAVING THROWN COLD WATER ON THEIR ACTION. NOTING VIETNAMESE POSITIVE ACTIONS ON MIAS, HOLBROOKE ALSO CHARGED THAT SRV HAD NOT BEGUN TO DISCUSS ON CONCRETE TERMS PROPOSALS THAT US MADE ON FIRST ROUND. HE THEN ADDED THAT US ACTIONS SHOULD NOT BE VIEWED IN CONTEXT OF WHAT WAS DONE IN PAST 30 DAYS BUT RATHER IN SECRET

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TERMS OF CHANGES THAT HAD TAKEN PLACE SINCE JANUARY 20. HE ENUMERATED POSITIVE US ACTIONS SUCH AS ON UN ADMISSION, LIFTING TRAVEL RESTRICTION, NEW ATTITUDE REGARDING SRV PARTICIPATION IN IFIS, AND US WILLINGNESS TO ESTABLISH IMMEDIATE DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS AND LIFT TRADE EMBARGO.

10. TURNING TO SRV AID REQUEST, HOLBROOKE NOTED THIS HAS MADE SITUATION MORE DIFFICULT FOR US SINCE HANOI HAS NOW ASKED FOR SPECIFIC AMOUNT OF MONEY WHICH US CANNOT PROVIDE BY LAW. HOLBROOKE THEN MOVED TO POINT 3 AND ASKED, IN VIEW OF HIEN'S STATEMENT THAT WE BOTH

AGREE ON THIS AS A GOAL, WHETHER WE CAN ANNOUNCE TODAY THAT WE HAVE AGREED TO ESTABLISH DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS AT THE AMBASSADORIAL LEVEL. HE THEN ADDED US VIEW THAT DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS ARE OF MUTUAL BENEFIT TO BOTH COUNTRIES. TURNING TO THE TRADE EMBARGO, HOLBROOKE AGAIN POSED QUESTION WHETHER US LIFTING OF EMBARGO PRIOR TO ESTABLISHING OF DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WOULD CHANGE ANYTHING ON THE PART OF THE VIETNAMESE GOVERNMENT.

11. AFTER SUMMING UP US POSITION THAT US:AGREES TO THE POINT SRV PUT FORWARD ON MIAS; APPRECIATES STEP SRV HAS TAKEN ON MIAS' IS PREPARED FOR DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS; BUT CANNOT ACCEPT AT THIS TIME AGREEMENT CONCERNING ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE, HOLBROOKE READ TO HIEN TEXT OF AMENDMENT WHICH CONGRESSMAN YOUNG IS PLANNING TO INTRODUCE WHICH WOULD FORBID ALL DIRECT OR INDIRECT AID TO VIETNAM AS WELL AS FUNDS CHanneled THROUGH OR ADMINISTERED BY INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS. HOLBROOKE STRESSED THAT ADMINISTRATION WILL OPPOSE THIS PROPOSAL BUT NOTED IT IS AN EXPRESSION OF SOME OF THE OPINION WITH WHICH WE MUST DEAL.

12. HIEN REPEATED CHARGE THAT US HAS NOT PUT FORWARD ANYTHING NEW WHILE VIETNAMESE HAVE TAKEN POSITIVE STEP
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ON 20 MIAS EVEN THOUGH ATMOSPHERE WAS DAMPENED BY UNFAVORABLE CONGRESSIONAL RESOLUTIONS AND ADVERSE PUBLICITY SURROUNDING RELEASE OF THE NIXON MESSAGE. HE DISMISSED US UNILATERAL ACTIONS ON UN TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS ETC., AS BEING OF THE PAST AND INDICATED LACK OF CLARITY REGARDING US POSITION ON SRV PARTICIPATION IN IFIS. HE ASKED WHAT THIS MEANS IN CONCRETE TERMS.

13. HOLBROOKE RESPONDED BRIEFLY BY SAYING WE HAD GIVEN VIETNAMESE GREAT DEAL AT LAST MEETING AND THAT WE ARE STILL WAITING FOR THEM TO DISCUSS DETAILS ON OUR OWN PROPOSAL.

14. PHAN HIEN ATTEMPTED TO PROVIDE MATHEMATICAL ANALYSIS OF US POSITION ON SRV PROPOSAL. ASSIGNING EACH POINT IN THE COMMUNIQUE A NUMERICAL VALUE OF ONE, AND AGREEING THAT ESTABLISHING DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WOULD BE EQUALLY ADVANTAGEOUS TO BOTH SIDES, HIEN CALCULATED THE US TO BE SEEKING UNFAIR ADVANTAGES IN ITS BARGAINING POSITION BY A SCORE OF ONE AND A HALF TO A HALF. HOLBROOKE UPSET HIEN'S CALCULATIONS BY NOTING THAT WE HAD GIVEN THEM ONE ADDITIONAL UNIT OF VALUE WHEN WE REMOVED OUR

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OBJECTIONS FROM UN MEMBERSHIP.

15. DROPPING MATHEMATICAL APPROACH TO NEGOTIATIONS, HIEN TURNED TO US STATEMENT THAT AMERICAN LAW PREVENTED US FROM ADDRESSING AID QUESTION. HIEN ASKED US TO IMAGINE WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF SRV NATIONAL ASSEMBLY PROMULGATED A LAW PROHIBITING FURTHER SEARCH FOR MIA INFORMATION DUE TO LACK OF US RESPONSE. FROM THIS HE DEDUCED THAT DISCUSSIONS OF EACH OTHERS LAWS INTRODUCES DIFFICULTY INTO NEGOTIATIONS AND URGED THAT WE INSTEAD FOLLOW INTERNATIONAL LAW.

16. HOLBROOKE RESPONDED BY EMPHASIZING DIFFERENCES BETWEEN US SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT AND VIETNAMESE UNITARY ONE. HIEN REJOINED THAT HOLBROOKE'S UNDERSTANDING OF VIETNAMESE SYSTEM IS NOT CORRECT AND THAT NATIONAL ASSEMBLY HOLDS REAL POWER OVER ISSUING LAWS. FOR EXAMPLE, HE NOTED NECESSITY FOR ASSEMBLY APPROVAL FOR RECENT EXTENSION OF TERRITORIAL SEA AND VIETNAMESE ADHERENCE TO 1973 PARIS AGREEMENT.

17. INDIRECTLY REPLYING TO HOLBROOKE'S QUESTION OF WHETHER HIEN WAS READY TO AGREE TODAY TO ANNOUNCING NORMALIZATION OF RELATIONS, HIEN ASKED IF HOLBROOKE AGREED WITH POINT 2. IF SO, HE WAS READY TO MAKE

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PUBLIC POINTS 2 AND 3 BUT ADDED SAYING THAT "THERE COULD NEVER BE 3 WITHOUT 2." HOLBROOKE THEN RETORTED BY ASKING WHETHER SRV REALLY THOUGHT US COULD ACCEPT POINT 2 WHEN IT WAS PROPOSED. HIEN AGAIN AVOIDED DIRECT RESPONSE BY RETURNING QUESTION AS TO HOW US WOULD LIKE TO SEE POINT 2 WORDED AND URGED THAT WE MAKE PROPOSAL.

18. HOLBROOKE CAUTIONED THAT IF AMERICAN PUBLIC WERE TO LEARN THAT US WAS DISCUSSING REQUEST FOR SUCH A LARGE AMOUNT OF MONEY, ADVERSE REACTION WOULD WIPE OUT ALL THE GOODWILL CREATED BY MIA GESTURE. HIEN ACCEPTED HOLBROOKE ASSESSMENT OF AMERICAN OPINION BUT COUNTERED WITH OBSERVATION THAT WORLD OPINION WAS IMPORTANT IN NEGOTIATING PROCESS AND IT WOULD BE ON THE SIDE OF SRV. THEN APPARENTLY ACCEPTING FACT THAT NO AGREEMENT COULD BE REACHED ON SRV COMMUNIQUE, HIEN NOTED THAT WE MUST GIVE CAREFUL THOUGHT TO FINDING A WAY TO CONTINUE PROGRESS AND URGED US TO SERIOUSLY CONSIDER SRV PROPOSALS AND TO EXPLAIN TO THE CONGRESS DIFFICULTIES INVOLVED.

19. HE THEN RETURNED TO HOLBROOKE'S QUESTION REGARDING LIFTING OF EMBARGO. CHARACTERIZING IT AS AN ILLEGAL MATTER WHICH SHOULD BE IMMEDIATELY ABOLISHED, HIEN REPLIED THAT ITS IMMEDIATE REMOVAL WOULD PRODUCE ABILITY FOR TWO COUNTRIES TO TRADE NORMALLY AND WOULD BE A GOOD SIGN THAT THE US WAS GIVING UP AN OLD POLICY. HE CONCLUDED BY ARGUING THAT POLITICALLY AND ECONOMICALLY THE EMBARGO REMOVAL IS ADVANTAGEOUS TO THE US SINCE IT WOULD ENCOURAGE VIETNAMESE IN SEARCH OF MIA INFORMATION AND WOULD ALLOW US COMPANIES TO DO BUSINESS.

20. FINALLY HIEN ASKED WHAT HE WAS TO SAY TO HIS LEADERS IN HANOI WHEN HE RETURNED "WITH AN EMPTY SUITCASE" AFTER HAVING BROUGHT THE 20 NEW MIA CASES TO US IN PARIS. HOLBROOKE RESPONDED BY URGING HIEN TO INFORM HIS GOVERNMENT THAT: THE US DEL COMES WITH THE SECRET

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GOODWILL AND SINCERITY OF THE PRESIDENT; THAT WE WILL OPERATE IN ACCORDANCE WITH OUR LAWS; THAT WE APPRECIATE MOVEMENT ON MIA; THAT WE HAVE MADE IMPORTANT PROGRESS IN THE PARIS MEETINGS; AND THAT PRESIDENT CARTER AND SECRETARY VANCE HAVE TAKEN FORTHCOMING POSITION TOWARDS SRV AT CONSIDERABLE POLITICAL RISK BECAUSE THEY BELIEVE IT THE RIGHT THING TO DO. HOLBROOKE ADDED CAVEAT THAT IF WE DO NOT MOVE FORWARD NOW, WE WILL BE PUSHED BACKWARDS. HE AGAIN PUSHED HIEN'S QUESTION OF IMMEDIATE ANNOUNCEMENT OF ESTABLISHMENT OF DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS

BY ASKING HIM IF HE FEELS WE COULD TAKE THAT STEP TODAY. HIEN'S RESPONSE WAS "WITH POINT 2". HOLBROOKE THEN SAID WE MUST AGREE TO DISAGREE AND REPEATED CAUTION REGARDING THE PUBLICATION OF SRV DRAFT COMMUNIQUE AND ADVERSE REACTION WHICH COULD BE EXPECTED IN THE US UPON PUBLICATION.

21. ALLUDING TO VIETNAMESE PUSH ON US "OBLIGATIONS", HOLBROOKE NOTED THAT OUR VIEW OF THE PAST DIFFERS FROM HIEN'S BUT THAT IT DOES US NO GOOD TO DEBATE AGAIN THE QUESTIONS ASSOCIATED WITH THE WAR. HE NOTED THAT SRV PROPOSAL IS IN FACT BASED ON THE SITUATION IN THE PAST --

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A SITUATION FAR DIFFERENT FROM WHAT EXISTS TODAY. HE URGED THAT WE NOT DEBATE IT BUT RATHER TALK ABOUT HOW WE DEAL WITH THE FUTURE.

22. MEETING THEN TURNED TO DISCUSSION OF WHAT WOULD BE SAID TO THE PRESS AND WHAT INFORMATION WOULD BE MADE PUBLIC. HOLBROOKE AGAIN REITERATED US ADVICE NOT TO MAKE PUBLIC EXISTENCE OF SRV COMMUNIQUE BECAUSE OF UNHELPFUL CONSEQUENCES IN US. ACTUAL PRESS STATEMENT REPORTED SEPTEL.

23. FOLLOWING DISCUSSION OF PRESS HANDLING, HIEN MADE ADDITIONAL COMMENTS ON HOLBROOKE'S IDEAS FOR HIS REPORT TO HANOI. EMPHASIZING THAT HE WOULD INDEED PASS ON HOLBROOKE'S POINTS TO HIS LEADERS, HE CAUTIONED THAT THEY WOULD ASK HIM WHAT NEW INITIATIVES AND POSITIONS

THE AMERICANS HAD PUT FORWARD OR WHAT ACTIONS US HAD TAKEN. HIEN CONCLUDED THAT SITUATION CAN NOT MOVE FORWARD RAPIDLY BECAUSE THE US HAS WORK TO DO WITH THE CONGRESS. HE NOTED VIETNAMESE WILLINGNESS TO PROVIDE ASSISTANCE IN THIS REGARD WHEN POSSIBLE BUT CONSIDERED

US DEALING WITH CONGRESS AN INTERNAL US AFFAIR.

24. MEETING THEN TURNED TO DISCUSSION OF TIME AND PLACE
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FOR NEXT SESSION. HIEN ASKED HOLBROOKE FOR HIS SUGGESTIONS AND HIMSELF NOTED THAT ANYPLACE INS IS FINE EXCEPT WASHINGTON BECAUSE "IT IS TOO SOON" FOR HIM TO GO THERE. NOTING THAT PARIS WOULD AGAIN BE ACCEPTABLE, HIEN ASKED IF HOLBROOKE WISHED TO GO TO HANOI. IF SO HE WOULD REPORT THIS TO HIS GOVERNMENT, WHICH WOULD PROBABLY EXTEND AN INVITATION. HOLBROOKE EXPRESSED UNCERTAINTY AS TO WHETHER USG WOULD GIVE PERMISSION FOR SUCH A TRIP BUT INDICATED THAT HE WOULD REPORT HIEN'S COMMENTS AND DISCUSS IT WITH THE SECRETARY. HOLBROOKE THEN ADDED THAT HE THOUGHT ONE MONTH WOULD BE THE APPROXIMATE TIME. HIEN NOTED SOME SCHEDULING CONFLICTS OF HIS WHICH MIGHT NECESSITATE MOVING MEETING TIL THE END OF JULY. HOLBROOKE REPLIED THAT AUGUST WAS PROBABLY NOT POSSIBLE FOR HIM. DATE AND TIMING WAS FINALLY LEFT OPEN WITH AGREEMENT THAT THE TWO SIDES WOULD BE IN TOUCH ABOUT IT. AT THIS POINT HOLBROOKE SUGGESTED A TEA BREAK TO BE FOLLOWED BY BOTH SIDES GOING OUT TO MEET THE PRESS.

25. DURING THE BREAK, HOLBROOKE DISCUSSED FURTHER WITH HIEN THE IMPORTANCE OF INFORMING HIS GOVERNMENT FULLY OF ADMINISTRATION'S INTENTION TO PERSERVE IN SEEKING NORMALIZATION AND THE POLITICAL PROBLEMS IT MUST DEAL WITH IN DOING SO. HOLBROOKE ASKED HIEN WHAT WE SHOULD DO RE MIA'S IN LAOS, SINCE OUR EFFORTS THERE SO FAR HAD PRODUCED NOTHING. HIEN RESPONDED THA LAO GOVERNMENT WAS FLEXIBLE AND SHOULD BE APPROACHED IN THE CONTEXT OF A GENERAL IMPROVEMENT OF RELATIONS. HE SAID PERHAPS WE SHOULD ADVISE THAI TO RESTRAIN SOME OF THEIR OFFICIALS FROM SUPPORTING HOSTILE ACTS AGAINST LAOS. HOLBROOKE TOOK THIS OCCASION TO STATE STRONGLY THAT THE US IS NOT INVOLVED IN ANY HOSTILE ACTIVITIES AGAINST LAOS OR ANY OTHER COUNTRIES IN THE REGION. HIEN THEN RASIED QUESTION OF VIETNAAESE-THAI RELATIONS AND SAID SRV WAS READY TO RESUME TALKS WITH THAI ON
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NORMALIZATION. HE STATED THAT TALKS COULD TAKE PLACE THROUGH RESPECTIVE EMBASSIES IN VIENTIANE AS SOON AS THAI NAME AMBASSADOR OR SUFFICIENTLY HIGH-RANKING CHARGE THERE. HE SAID SRV WANTED GOOD RELATIONS ON BASIS OF THEIR 4 POINTS, TO WHICH THAI INTERNAL AFFAIRS. IN RESPONSE TO HOLBROOKE'S QUERY, HIEN AGREED THAT US COULD PASS THIS ALONG TO THAI.

26. FOLLOWING THE BREAK HOLBROOKE AND HIEN MET BRIEFLY WITH REPORTERS. STATEMENTS REPORTED SEPTTEL. GAMMON

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